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25 YEARS OF WINTER SCHOOL ON ABSTRACT ANALYSIS

BOHUSLAV BALCAR AND PETR SIMON

This year, Winter School was held for twenty fifth time. Even the World Congress of Mathematicians did not enjoy so many meetings. Our aim is to share with the readers several informal, incoherent and somewhat forgotten memories.

Winter School on Abstract Analysis did not come into being from mere fluctuation of vacuum. Three components participated on its origin. First, it was the miserable political situation after 1968: Contacts with mathematicians abroad were severely restricted, abilities of students were not considered as the main criteria for doctoral studies, travels to the conferences and meetings in the West were virtually impossible. Second, a group of young and gifted mathematicians appeared, eager to work seriously and hard. Third, the personality of Zdeněk Frolík: he did not give up and found a way to better the things.

Zdeněk Frolík was 39, distinguished and respected topologist, who opened the first round of Winter School in 1973. His intention was to put people together, out of families and bureaucracy, to do mathematics supplemented by skiing and playing snow soccer. The core consisted of David Preiss, Jan Reiterman († 1992), Jiří Vilímovský († 1987), Petr Holický, Jan Pelant, Jan Pachl, Luděk Zajíček, Luboš Vašák, Miloš Zahradník — all active members of Frolík's Seminars on Measure Theory or on Uniform Spaces.

Starting with the second year, Winter School became international thanks to Polish participants. During the years 1973—1977, this school gained a popularity among the people interested in general topology, functional analysis, measure theory and combinatorics. These years, it took place in Štefanová, Slovakia, close to the excellent down-hill skiing area Vrátná Dolina. We are happy that an eye-witness of this period, professor Alain Louveau, 1976 participant, visited this year Winter School again. 1976 was also remarkable from other reasons: we had the first transatlantic participant, professor William Weiss from Canada, and Jan Pelant broke his leg at skiing (fortunately, that was the only serious accident during the whole history of Winter School). In 1977, professors David Fremlin and Michel Talagrand were invited and arrived.

Because of the growing interest, the hut in Štefanová was unable to accommodate all the members, and it was necessary to divide the School into two consecutive sections, one from Analysis, the other from Topology. Three next years took place in the Giant Mountains: Michlův Mlýn 1978, Strážné 1979, Moravská Bouda 1980. Since 1981 till 1991, Winter School moved south to Šumava Mountain and was held in Srní with one exception at 1984, when it occupied Železná Ruda. In 1992, the part of Analysis followed the part of Topology, topology took place in Harrachov, Czechoslovakia, analysis in Strobel, Austria, under the care of Charles Stegall. 1993 – 1995 Poděbrady, 1996 Lhota pod Rohanovem, 1997 Křišťanovice.

The Winter School 1989 was the last School for Zdeněk Frolík. He passed away on May, 3rd, 1989. Since then, the responsibility for Winter Schools is fully on his pupils, namely Petr Holický and Jaroslav Tišer.

Now, two nonstandard moments from the history of Winter Schools.

The worst living conditions were at Strážné 1979. It was necessary to break the ice if you wanted to wash your face or to use your toothbrush. One foreign participant arrived late evening, suffered through the whole night and escaped the next morning forever. We should say though that those who survived appreciated mathematics on this Winter School very much. Winter School was robbed in 1980 at Moravská Bouda: The cashier found his room opened and all collected money had been stolen. Apparently, the situation was horrible for the organizers and also for Z. Frolík. Fortunately, professor Jan Aarts improved our situation by a generous gift.

We are proud for having an opportunity to meet in the time of Winter School dozens of prominent mathematicians. We have already mentioned a few of them, now, let us give a very incomplete sample of other outstanding names in alphabetical order: Paul Erdős, András Hajnal, Michael Kean, Isaac Namioka, Aleksander Pełczyński, Endre Szemerédi.

Finally, a couple of words about Zdeněk Frolík. Political changes in our country came closely after his death. Frolík was in memoriam awarded by the highest medal of Academy of Sciences of Czechoslovakia in 1991, and in 1993, he was named Professor of Charles University in memoriam.